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Passaparola, The Movement of Political Information and Organization in Two Immigrant Communities In Rome

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Title: *Passaparola, The Movement of Political Information and Organization in Two Immigrant Communities In Rome*

Submitted by: Le Anh Nguyen Long, *Indiana University*

Introduction

Non-EU immigrants increasingly account for a larger portion of immigration into Western Europe, introducing cultural and racial differences that create conditions with policy implications important for study. Italy, the EU member state with the fastest growing foreign-born population, is home to the third largest population of legal immigrants in Europe, with 3.9 million foreign residents hailing from 191 countries (Eurostat). This high concentration of foreign-born residents in Italy is even more notable when one considers the relative novelty of in-migration into Italy as a socio-demographic phenomenon.

Complex patterns of conflict and cooperation characterize the relationship between native Italians and immigrants. Conflict can lead to exploitation (Gradstein and Shiff, 2006), interruption of public service delivery (Alesina et al., 2002) or, in the worst case, episodes of violence. Political integration, on the other hand, mitigates conflict by opening lines of communication between host and immigrants. Without political integration, immigrants are left without a voice in the processes that result in policies which impact their daily lives and shape their interactions with natives.

When social arrangements are reorganized through immigration, formerly un-associated individuals find themselves situated in a network of relationships with co-ethnics. Those situated within these networks draw upon economic, political and emotional resources available through membership in the network that sustain them beyond the early period of their immigrant experience (Borjas, 1994, Clark, 2004; Djajic, 2003; Fitzpatrick, 1966; MacDonald and MacDonald, 1965; and Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993).

Social capital is the value embedded within the structure of human relationships (networks) which can be activated in pursuit of individual and collective interests (Coleman, 1988). It is a critical resource for facilitating immigrant political integration (Jacobs and Tillie, 2004; La Due Lake and Huckfeldt, 1998) through (1) the dissemination of politically relevant information, know-how and ideas within immigrant communities, resulting in political engagement (Jacobs and Tillie, 2004; La Due Lake and Huckfeldt, 1998), and (2) the cultivation of norms of political participation which allow for the mobilization of members of immigrant communities (Leighley, 1995; Putnam, 2000). Just as

relationships vary, so do the characteristics of social capital (Sandefur and Laumann, 1998). Different goals require different types of social capital (Walker et al., 1997; Wesland and Bolton, 2003).

The debate regarding the ideal network structure for pursuing opportunities continues. While a closed network fosters norms of reciprocity that enable members to work together to overcome shared challenges by building enforceable trust (Coleman, 1988), it also produces homogeneous information and predisposes a community to repetition and replication rather than innovation (Walker et al., 1997). In contrast, a network with structural holes allows its members to gain access to new information and work with new partners in achieving their goals (Burt, 1992). It is commonly thought that these weak ties are infinitely more valuable in creating economic and social opportunities (Granovetter, 1973; Lancee, 2010; Putnam, 2000) than ties within a closed network.

Nevertheless, access to new information and opportunities are not useful when the types of social relationships that foster cooperation through network closure are missing (Burt, 1998; Gargiوليو and Benassi, 2006). For example, Djajic (2003) observes that while the tendency of immigrants to cluster together along national (and even to some extent provincial) lines reflects the incompleteness of their integration, it is these community structures that provide the stable environment which supports the academic performance and economic success of the second generation. Given that most individuals belong to multiple networks characterized by both closure and structural holes, it is useful to understand networks as possessing both qualities.

Background and Literature Review

Political participation allows members of the polity to exercise their voice; therefore, it is the only legitimate precursor to democratic representation (Hirschman, 1970; Schmidt et al., 2010). Moreover, because it requires action, a study of political participation acknowledges a citizen's agency in the political process. Undoubtedly, immigrants must participate in host country politics if they are to address their particularized concerns related to their legal status and cultural needs as new residents.

Political participation is about opportunity and choice; it is conditioned by those institutional arrangements and historical events that shape the political opportunity structure (Leighley, 1995; Koopmans, 1999). Koopmans (1999) defines opportunities as the "constraints, possibilities, and threats that originate outside the mobilizing group but affects its chances of mobilizing and/or

realizing its collective interests.” A difficulty in studying political participation is the perceived and actual exclusion from host country politics because of immigrants’ status as non-citizens¹. In this respect, Rome makes a good case for the study of immigrant political participation because in 2004, the former mayor of Rome, Walter Veltroni, created elected positions for the representation of foreign residents in city politics. Immigrants in Rome have since been given the opportunity to elect representatives to the city council and each of the municipal districts of Rome. In addition, the Veltroni administration also founded a consultative body to communicate migrant policy needs (Coen and Rossi, 2004). One purpose² of this “experiment” was to provide a more direct line of exchange between immigrants and city government. In the words of his delegate, Franca Eckart Coen, the goal was to give immigrants the, “capacity to speak for themselves and not through interpreters” (Coen and Rossi, 2004). With this action, Veltroni effectively opened the opportunity structure in Rome; and it is interesting to see what characterizes the groups that have mobilized to take advantage of these opportunities.

Access to information is a fundamental driver of social and political participation (La Due Lake, 1998; Putnam, 2000; Verba et al., 1995). Language and attention are the immigrant’s primary barriers to political information. While information on politics and policy is available through multiple sources, including the local and national media, government offices and other entities that serve immigrant communities, problems with language fluency — especially with written Italian — can result in the proliferation of misinformation in various forms (e.g. missing information or distorted information). Further complicating the situation is that, on top of being highly bureaucratized and at times incomplete, the regulations and requirements that immigrants are subject to are quite changeable (Ruspini, 2007).

Because the average immigrant’s attention is often monopolized by work considerations not much time is left over for keeping abreast with these changes. As a result, many immigrants learn important information experientially. As Hibbing and Theiss Morse (2000) write, “people judge

¹In Italy, participation in local politics, particularly by non-EU immigrants, is limited by the difficulty of obtaining citizenship.

² The positions created by the administration carried little substantive power as these foreign representatives had no vote in quorum. The ultimate goal of this project was to move towards a system where immigrants could vote in administrative elections within the city (Coen and Rossi, 2004).

government by the results and are generally ignorant of or indifferent about the methods by which the results are achieved”. But there are times when they cannot attain information experientially. If the cost of making a ‘mistake’ is high, the risks involved in learning things experientially may push them to explore other avenues of accessing information. Other times, the information is specialized or complicated, or the information is so new that even the subject is unaware of its existence. Here, absence of information results in absence in participation. In such cases, even with the availability of information through other sources, immigrants tend to prefer to consult with co-ethnics.

Communicating with co-ethnics is preferred because the linguistic and cultural costs of communication are much lower (Djajic, 2003). Familiarity allows people to build expectations of behavior (Coleman, 1988; Djajic, 2003). It is often the case that this information is accessed through word of mouth, *passaparola*, channels that can be haphazardly traced back to key members (leaders) of immigrant communities. These methods of information spread carry policy implications. In informal, word-of-mouth information channels, though, (mis)information can spread like wildfire. Moreover, as Kristine Crane (2004) has observed, “ethnic information channels may replace or overlap with official channels in ways that interfere with policy implementation”. As anyone who has ever played Chinese whispers before can attest, information has a way of changing with every pass (Baker, 1984); and, in an environment where mistakes could lead to expulsion, even a slight corruption of the information can be intolerable. In addition, the glut of information (and misinformation) can produce information overload. When there is so much gossip/information, the certainty over the quality of information is low, resulting in a lot of second guessing and at times, paralysis.

Managing Information Corruption, Balancing Effective with Efficiency in Information Spread

An important tradeoff that needs to be considered is the trade-off between efficiency and novelty. If we consider the ‘speed’ of dissemination as a measure of efficiency, then closure (low numbers of bridges and high degrees of network density) increases the efficiency³ of information spread (Buskens and Yamaguchi, 1999). Networks characterized by high degrees of closure hold advantages especially in the case when information must come from or arrive at a specific target ‘node’ within a network (Sandefur and Laumann, 1998, Habayarima, et al., 2001). Unfortunately, in

³ Efficiency is a measure of the speed at which information reaches all actors within a structure.

closed networks, information can be repetitive and redundant (Burt, 1992; Portes and Sessenbrenner, 1993; and Sandefur and Laumann, 1998). In contrast, networks with lower degrees of connectedness and more ‘bridges’ provide a pool of diverse information resources (Burt, 1992; Granovetter, 1975). The multiplicity of information also allows for the cross-checking and validation of incoming information, increasing its reliability. Fortunately, these conditions are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Networks are made up of many, porous and overlapping subgroups (Everett and Borgatti, 1998) which allow enterprising actors to leverage the diverse range of benefits stemming from multiple memberships.

Information spells opportunity. When an individual can employ the information and other resources gained through out-group connections with knowledge of the structure of in-group organization, he/she is positioned to mobilize the in-group for political and other purposes. Specifically, members who play dual roles of boundary spanner and central connector can capture the greatest benefits from these dual streams of knowledge. Many networks are organized around so called “central connectors”. These nodes have the highest number of direct connections to others within their network. The role of a ‘centrally’ positioned node in contributing to efficiency is more important if we consider how his/her familiarity with network composition allows him/her to find and reach a ‘target’ quicker. Boundary spanners, on the other hand are individuals that span structural holes between groups and often act as ‘roving ambassadors’ to each (Cross and Prusack, 2002). These nodes, being privy to two sources of information, can benefit personally from information brokerage (Burt, 1992; Cross and Prusack, 2002; Lancee, 2001). Not only can information arbitrage be a source of social and economic profit for an entrepreneurial boundary spanner⁴, when employed creatively, it can reposition an entire neighborhood/community within a network and, this in turn, furthers the power and influence of the boundary spanner itself.

Information gathering is only one half of the process. Dissemination and employment are other important tasks. Here the question of network range and composition becomes even more important. The questions remain. Which relationships and positions are more central in a system of political information? Are those relationships that bring in new information more central, or is it those relationships that allow for the spread of information?

⁴ A boundary spanner is a node that crosses the structural hole between his/her group and neighboring groups within a network (Cross and Prusack, 2002).

In response, I first propose that the optimum network structure to capture informational advantages varies with the novelty and ‘time sensitivity’ of the information being considered.

- The availability of old, repeated information is sometimes necessary to lower entry costs and to maintain the stability in a system. In an environment characterized by the constant entry of new nodes and the transience of existing nodes, repetition and redundancy hold value. In this case, network closure (or embeddedness) optimizes informational advantages.
- In the case of new information, bridges always serve to bring information in quicker. So less dense, closed networks are preferable.
- New information can be time sensitive: a community must react immediately or lose an opportunity (if the information concerns an opportunity) or pay a penalty (if the information concerns a threat). Assuming that structured information dissemination is preferable to random contagion in order to preserve the consistency of information familiarity with internal information channels is key to effective information dissemination.

The central proposition is that nodes positioned centrally and peripherally in multiple structures, e.i. in a system of mixed embeddedness, are best able to create benefits for themselves and their community by disseminating time sensitive or ‘perishable’ information. Mixed embeddedness⁵ is how I refer to the condition of nodes placed in a large loose network with multiple, cohesive subgroups which they can span through their relationship to multiple internal boundary spanners (also referred to as *information brokers*⁶) and who also span holes to the out-group.

After a description of my data and methods, I use anecdotal information to detail how actors with varying degrees of the mixed embeddedness have organized and mobilized their communities to meet their social and political goals.

⁵ I borrow loosely from Kloosterman and Rath’s (2001) model of mixed-embeddedness, previously applied to immigrant entrepreneurship to see political mobilization as dependent on opportunity structures available through networks within and without the immigrant community.

⁶ Cross and Prusack, 2002

Data and Methods

A large body of research on civic and political participation looks at the role of individual characteristics, such as socio-economic status or age, in determining 'activism'. These studies have provided powerful evidence that those socio-economic and demographic traits that reflect high socio-economic stature/position are also positively related to activism. While instructive, it is often the case that these models overlook the role of each actor's relationships in limiting or facilitating the employment of individual-level assets in goal attainment (Galaskiewicz and Wasserman, 1993, Coleman, 1988; Leighley, 1995).

Context matters greatly when considering the joint experience of blue collar, non-Western immigrants in Italy because it creates special circumstances where the role of these individual-level traits (found to be so powerful in predicting participation under other settings) is greatly diminished. For example, previous research has identified education as the foremost determinant of political participation (Verba et al., 1995). But, in this context, these traits are insufficient for engendering participation if, irrespective of human capital endowments, immigrants continue to be placed in occupations and social situations which isolate them from the mainstream. Additionally, a study of group-based participation is important because many activities that are political are also social, thus requiring coordination and cooperation between individuals (Costa and Khan, 2002; Jackson, 2003; Leighley, 1995). This highlights another key consideration in the study of political participation: the need for organizers or, in essence, hierarchy. Hence, to describe political participation within immigrant communities, it is instructive to look at the individual within a structure of relationships that serve to facilitate or stymie 'activism'.

The findings presented in this paper are based on the preliminary results of an ongoing research project aimed at constructing and comparing the ethnic networks in four non-EU immigrant communities in Rome selected for study because of variations in their size, social, demographic, and political and economic importance within the city: Bangladeshis, Filipinos, Moroccans and Peruvians. Using data collected through interviews and direct observations of members of two important and growing immigrant communities in Rome --- Filipinos and Bangladeshis --- as well as their 'associates' outside their ethnic communities, I employ some basic network analysis to describe these networks and to describe action within these communities as a product of mixed embeddedness.

Network analysis is commonly undertaken to assess how individuals extract value from their social networks. The networks studied here were constructed using information collected through a series of interviews and supplemented with insights gained through direct observation. Experts on Italian immigration and service served as the primary contacts in a snowball sampling frame. Subjects were asked who the important leaders in immigrant communities were, what these subjects role in each community was, how often they contacted these subjects and for what purpose. They were also requested to rate the quality of the information that they received and asked what traits makes an entity a preferable information source. Each subsequent subject was then contacted based on these 'referrals' and asked a similar set of questions. Hanneman and Riddle caution the analyst that this method of sampling, "may tend to overstate the "connectedness" and "solidarity" of populations of actors" and I have been careful not to do so in my analysis.

A more challenging limitation of snowball sampling is that it often fails to identify and locate unconnected (isolates) or poorly connected (pendants) entities in the network. I try to address this limitation by supplementing the 'targeted' interviews with 30-minute interviews of randomly selected subjects travelling through central train station in Rome, Termini. Respondents were surveyed on their sources of political information as well as their knowledge of important practical information.

The focus of this paper is on the activity of individual nodes who belong primarily to subgroups within the larger ethnic network as well as secondarily to some other looser subgroup tied to the host communities institutional network. These sub-groups may be formally or informally constituted and each member of the subgroup can access the other within 2 steps. I describe the degree of closure in the networks being studied using measures of *network constraint*. The property of constraint (or cohesion) captures the degree to which relationships in a network are directly or indirectly concentrated in a single point of contact (Burt, 1992). Networks with more closure (higher density⁷, and more hierarchy) have higher constraint. Constraint decreases with the number of bridges in a network. One measure of hierarchy also considered is reciprocal relationships. Increased reciprocity, which characterizes closure, should increase the disposition for cooperation but may also hamper mobilization in cases where leadership is not well established.

⁷ Density is measured as the ratio of actual ties in a network to all possible ties.

The Larger Information Network

One hundred and seventy two subjects are included in this preliminary mapping of the ‘community’ network which includes Bangladeshis, Filipinos, Italians and other migrants. It is important to note here, that not only is this mapping preliminary, it also only includes information on subjects with ties to structured information channels and therefore provides excludes word-of-mouth channels. Within this network, 56 nodes are Filipino and 36 are Bangladeshi. Table 1 (below) summarizes some descriptive information of these networks. As can be expected from a multi-ethnic dispersed network, the larger community has a very low density⁸ (0.0386). Both the Filipino and Bangladeshi networks that have been located within this greater structure also have relatively low degrees of density (0.1548 for Filipinos and 0.1206 for Bangladeshis). While the low density numbers suggest that these networks are not very connected, the high degree of hierarchy suggests that there are some very stable and cohesive structures within each of these communities.

Table 1. BASIC MACROSTRUCTURE ATTRIBUTES

	DENSITY	CONNECTEDNESS	HIERARCHY	EFFICIENCY	LUB	RECIPROCITY
Wider Community	0.0386	0.9525	0.3841	0.9560	0.9975	0.4538
Bangladeshis	0.1206	0.8429	0.5021	0.8531	0.9356	0.4206
Filipinos	0.1548	1.000	0.4601	0.8222	0.9949	0.4866

Measures for hierarchy within the community were, generally, high. Table 1 includes four measures of hierarchy calculated using UCINET, Connectedness, Hierarchy, Efficiency, and LUB. In each of these three cases, it looks as if the networks have hierarchy-based cohesion. In each of these networks, there is low redundancy (information channels are clear as indicated by the relatively high ‘efficiency’ scores) and high degrees of connectedness, particularly in the case of Filipinos where the score of 1.000 for connectedness indicates that there is at least one actor in the network that connects all the other actors. As we see in the subsequent sections, the combination of loose connections with high degrees of organization can be instrumental in moving groups.

⁸ Which means that actual ties make up 3.8 percent of all possible ties

Bangladeshi Network

In 1974, around the same time that the Philippine government was establishing its Programme for Overseas Filipino Workers, the Bangladeshi government began the Wage Earners Scheme (WES) which provided immigrants with favorable exchange rates when they would send money home through official channels to encourage and support out-migration (Knights, 1993). Initially, Italy was considered a country of transit for Bangladeshis headed for other countries in Western Europe but Bangladeshi presence in Italy spiked with the 1989 sanatoria or asylum.

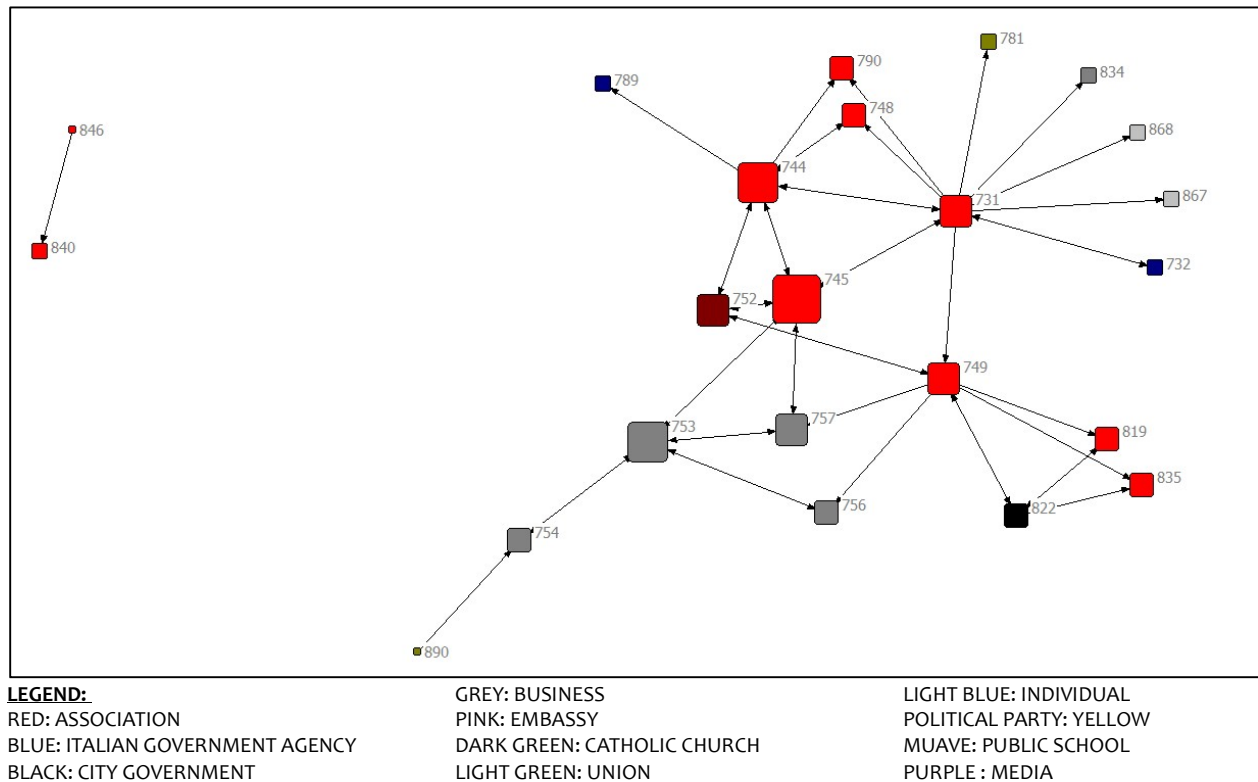
Bangladeshi immigrants often arrived in Italy, via one of two types of chain migration which are usually regionally based. The first type are characterized by altruistic chains built on kinship ties and the second involve the brokerage *Adam bepari* (middlemen), who bring in Bangladeshi migrants through established transnational chains (Knights, 1993). The insufficiencies and complications of accessing state-sponsored services have facilitated the evolution of these relationships into patron-client relationships where new migrants rely on their ‘sponsors’ as resources for lodging and employment.

Even though they have arrived later than other ethnic groups, the Bangladeshi community has managed to show a high degree of social and political integration and coordination. In fact, one of the registered Bangladeshi associations is headed by an Italian (Subject 744) and receives sponsorship and resources from many Italian backers. While their phenotypical characteristics, their culture, religion and language, marks them as distinct from Italians, Bangladeshis have managed to establish many important relationships with non-Bangladeshi entities. Bangladeshis, after all, share many cultural, linguistic and phenotypical traits with other South Asian immigrants in Rome.

Bangladeshis interact across groups in many ways. Their economic activities, for example, place them in contact with co-ethnics and other groups. Many Bangladeshis provide labor and other services (not just to Italians but also to fellow Bangladeshis and other foreign business owners). One economic area where they have shown a strong presence is in entrepreneurship; and in Rome, it is mainly expressed in the form of cooperative businesses, reflecting a strong reciprocity within the community. So visible is their presence that the intersection between Casilina and Marranella Torpignattara has become popularly known as “Bangla Town”. Located in Municipality 6, the presence of immigrants from the province of Shariatpur, in particular, is quite so much so that the quadrant’s adjuct councilor hails from this province. A considerable number of Bangladeshis

participate in the underground economy. For Bangladeshis, a common means of making a livelihood is to work as a street hawker. Street-hawking can occur as a fallback or starter occupation or may be determined through the co-provincial migratory chains where the receivers/sponsors who meet them in Italy push them towards this trade (Knights, 1993). Bangladeshis involved in these occupations are among the most embedded and network dependent of the community.

Chart 1. THE BANGLADESHI COMMUNITY IN ROME



Rather than a unified social network, the Bangladeshi network is better described as a complex system of mutually interconnected porous networks (2010 Osservatorio Romano). Many of the clusters in this network are politically based associations, with each faction in the network organized around provincial and political lines. The map in Chart 1 (above) represents a slice of the Bangladeshi community that is based economically in the historic district of the Esquilino. Each node represents an individual and the color of each node indicates the organizational affiliation of that node (see Legend underneath map). The size of each node represents the in-degrees of each node, or the

number of nominations the entity received⁹. As we can see from the map, many activities in the community are centered on two activities: *associations* and *businesses*. In fact, with very few exceptions, many Associational leaders are also influential business leaders who utilize their economic power to spread their political influence.

“Leaders” or “Klan” maintain strong lines of communication both with their own members and also with the Italian entities to which they are tied. In the Bangladeshi community, much information spread is dependent on word of mouth channels. Information moves from associational leadership, to members, to their peers. Mapping the relationships between Bangladeshis and associations can be challenging. Few of the Bangladeshis interviewed readily acknowledged their ties to associations; instead, many nominated intermediary nodes (accounting for the high in-degree scores of these nodes) with direct ties to these associations. 744, 745, 752, 731, 749 and 753 were the most nominated nodes in the Bangladeshi network. Two things are notable about these nodes. First, each of these nodes have very good grasp of Italian (it should be noted that 744 and 745 are Italians that founded a Bangladeshi association), and second, these nodes are all economically tied to Italians either through business or employment. Direct ties between individuals and associations were only observed later when subjects were observed attending meetings and gatherings organized by association leaders and/or frequenting the businesses of association leaders (these businesses also serve the dual function of association headquarters). While not included in the image above, these relationships have been noted in the relationship matrix and used in the calculations given below in Table 2.

Table 2. MEASURES OF EMBEDDEDNESS IN THREE BANGLADESHI ASSOCIATIONS

	DENSITY	CONNECTEDNESS	HIERARCHY	EFFICIENCY	LUB	E-I INDEX
Bangladeshi Network	0.121	0.843	0.502	0.853	0.936	
Network748	0.714	1.000	0.000	0.238	1.000	0.34
Network819	0.412	1.000	0.604	0.551	0.762	0.14
Network790	0.427	1.000	0.696	0.524	0.762	0.49

⁹ This is a nomination based on the response to the question: “What are the points of information in the community?”

Network 819 (The “Park” Association)

Subject 819 is the head of one of the most established Bangladeshi associations in the Rome. His reach goes across the zone and across nationalities. The association’s influence is broadened by the numerous business activities of 819 and other leaders within his association. 819 was among the pioneer Bangladeshis in Rome and his relationships date back to the cross-national organization of political manifestations by Asian immigrant groups in the late eighties and early nineties.

Like many association leaders, 819 builds influence with co-nationals by establishing ‘loyalty’ through the services he provides them. He employed these relationships, business ties (within and without the Bangladeshi community) to mobilized support for the successful campaign of wife, Subject 822, who as a result has become an active city politician. This in turn has widened his influence within the community. This tie to institutional networks promises to expand his reach not just to Italians but also to other immigrant groups. 822 has already managed to establish strong ties to a Peruvian (subject 824) who is employed by one of the most powerful trade unions in Italy and connected to an active association for women’s rights: NODI.

At present, 819’s greatest limitation is his lack of cohesive ties to important entities within the Italian mainstream. Not only does his group have low levels of out-group ties (as indicated by the low E-I index of 14%) the out-group ties are primarily to other Bangladeshi or immigrant nodes.

Network 790 (The Station Association)

In contrast, Subject 819’s main rival, Subject 790 has managed to build strong relationships outside his community. Not only does 790 have a high loyal following of Bangladeshis who come to him for different types of assistance, he has also managed to secure a contract to provide cultural services for Subject 758, a central actor who works coordinates important city sponsored intercultural activities. He has also become the intermediary of choice for many Italian association heads in the area, in particular, 744 , 759 and 769 who are coordinators of three important Italian associations in the area. Such connections expand his ability to provide more services and further cement relationships of loyalty within his community of co-nationals. The feedback effect is quite strong.

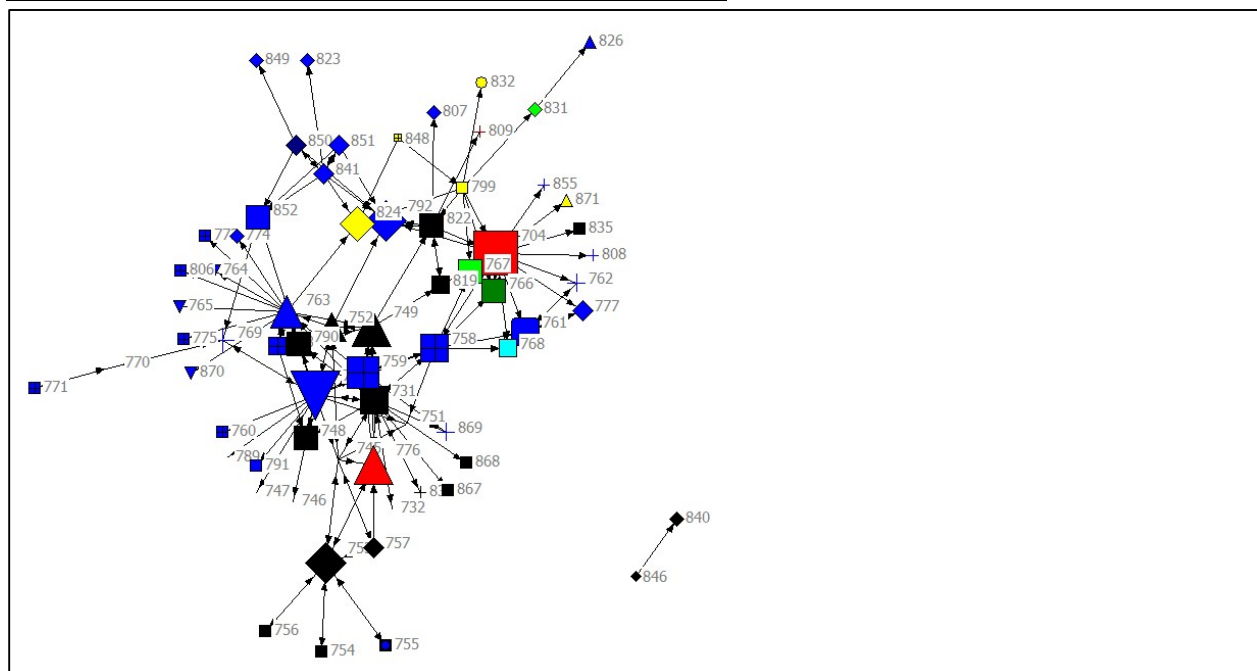
Despite the high level of competition between the two community leaders, cross associational organization occurs. Organization and coordination within the community is facilitated by the dense settlement patterns of Bangladeshis along the contiguous residential areas or *quartieri* stretching

from Esquilino to the center, Centocelle. Such density allows Klan to jointly coordinate events relevant to the entire community such as a recent protests or celebration. The Bangladeshi newspaper and the publications of the various associations are also helpful in providing the information necessary once a community event is organized and underway.

One under-recognized function of nodes 744, 745, 752, 731, 749 and 753 (mentioned above), is to act as informal intermediaries between competing associations. Providing leaders as well as members platforms and possibilities for ‘mingling’ which keeps them somewhat abreast of developments in each other’s camps. The key role of these “information brokers” is to maintain a balance in the flow of communications to these competing factions. This keeps associations from becoming isolated and ensures that fewer numbers of associational members become ‘pendants’ in the network by providing them with alternative ‘ties’ into the network.

If we expand the community out to look at its contacts within the Italian community (see chart 2 below), we see the high level of exchange relationships coming from the Bangladeshis to the outside. Since the stabilization flows of Bangladeshis into Italy, its leadership has worked hard to open the community by ‘lobbying’ through intercultural events. Bangladeshi leaders use the channels they have established not just to bring important information to their constituents, but also to bring information from the community to the Italians.

Chart 2. BANGLADESHIS WITHIN THE WIDER COMMUNITY



LEGEND:

BLACK: BANGLADESH
BLUE: ITALY
RED: PHILIPPINES

GREY: EGYPT
PINK: UKRAIN
DARK GREEN: ECUADOR
LIGHT GREEN: NIGERIA

YELLOW: PERU
LIGHT GREY: BOLIVIA
DEEP BLUE: BRASIL

Network 748 (The Language School Clique)

This exchange with Italians has opened opportunities even for the more deeply embedded members of the Bangladeshi community. Which brings us to a discussion of a very interesting subgroup, the 'Language School Clique'. This subgroup is made up mainly of Bangladeshi mothers who participate in the Italian language courses organized by groups associated with the Public School of the Esquilino, Federico Di Donato. The school has a very active Parent's Association whose first President was able to convince the school's headmaster to provide the association with classroom space (in an abandoned section of the school) for the association's activities. Soon after the facilities were refurbished through the efforts of the school's parents, after school activities, summer programs, and intercultural activities were established in these facilities. For many of the Bangladeshi women interviewed for the study, the language courses were an opportunity not just to learn Italian¹⁰, but also to have valuable social interaction outside of their homes.

Cultural constraints can limit Bangladeshi women's participation in the social life of Italians, and to counteract this, subject 748 actively sought out the support of an Italian association leader (Subject 744), appealing to him to use his association's resources to provide programs for the empowerment of Bangladeshi women. With his support, she founded an association for Bangladeshi women. The connection to the Italian association gives her access to economic resources (many of the sponsors are Italian) and also social connections. Moreover, her relationship with 744 has resulted in increased connections to her co-nationals through the secretary of 744's association, Subject 731, who is an established social mediator with ties to city government and to other active associations in the quarter. 748's subgroup is characterized by high density (71 percent) and high reciprocity (as indicated by the Hierarchy measure of 0.000). It is also characterized by a high degree of redundancy, with each of the members getting similar information from many sources driven primarily by the homogeneity of the group's 'members' and the basis on which they interact. This

¹⁰¹⁰ The need to learn Italian has been driven by many motivations, recently, a strong motivator was the adoption of a recent policy that makes language proficiency a requirement for attaining the 5 year permit to stay.

may soon change; pushed by 744's association, the group is attempting to become transnational with the recent purchase of land in Bangladesh for the establishment of an associational seat there.

The Bangladeshi network has become so porous that leadership is no longer reserved by the business elite, but can be pursued by enterprising Bangladeshis capable of making the 'right' connections within Italian society.

The Filipino Network

The Filipino community has high levels of social organization but lower levels of political organization. Its social organization allows it to coordinate events that bring Filipinos together for feasts and celebrations. And, as was discussed earlier, the community will mobilize to exercise a sort of migratory form of bayanihan¹¹. At this point, it is important to highlight that a study of immigrant political action must differentiate between political participation within immigrant communities and participation in mainstream/host country politics. Arguably, participation which does not extend beyond the bounds of the ethnic community is of limited value for immigrant integration.

The boundaries of the Filipino network are quite distinct, which is attributable to the marked physical, cultural and linguistic attributes of Filipinos that distinguish them from other ethnicities and their placement in economic activities that isolate them from other groups. Filipinos in Italy present a clear case of the blue collar migrant, as described in Portes and Zhou's (1992) theory of *Segmented Assimilation*, who fails in first and subsequent generations to achieve economic and social mobility in the host country, irrespective of his/her educational and professional qualifications.

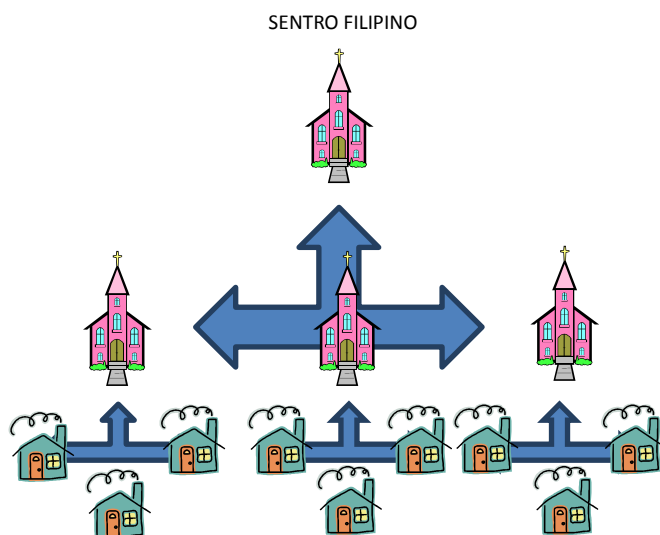
Filipinos --- mostly employed as domestic helpers (95 percent of whom were women) --- first arrived in Italy in 1977 via an agreement between both governments and as part of a purposive policy of labor exportation adopted during the Marcos regime (Basa and Jing de la Rosa, 2004, UNDP and IDOS). After more than four decades, domestic services remain the primary sector of employment for Filipinos in Italy. Placed silently and invisibly in the homes of their employers, Filipinos have had few opportunities to interact with Italians in contexts where they can avail of political information and 'training'.

¹¹ The term refers to the traditional Filipino practice of assisting neighbors move and erect their homes. In the present day, it has evolved to describe an umbrella of activities including civic participation.

Filipino settlement patterns are based on the joint considerations of access to employment and cost. As a consequence, the community is dispersed across the city. Despite this geographic dispersal, the Filipino community maintains a loose (recall the low measures of density within the wider Filipino network reported in Table 1) but well-organized communications network. The presence of comparable, cohesive, and well-defined subgroups or clusters within the broader Filipino network missions, allow for the maintenance of organizational structures within the broader community.

The community's length of stay has given Filipinos an edge in coordination. Because the community was built through 'altruistic' migratory chains, a high degree of reciprocity and mutual exchange has been established, further facilitating coordination and cooperation within the community. The first batch of OFWs in Italy arrived with the aide of recruitment agencies and, once settled, they employed their resources in finding and providing lodging and work for newer waves of OFWs, establishing a wider circle of familiars. Also, the religious faith of the Filipinos has given them a point of commonality and a shared physical space where they are guaranteed to find other co-ethnics. In fact, Sentro Filipino, the Filipino Catholic chaplaincy at Santa Prudenza, is one of the central institutions around which Filipino sub-groups or cliques are organized, the other is the Philippine Embassy.

Chart 3. SIMPLE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART FOR SENTRO FILIPINO



The chart above is a rudimentary depiction of the organization of the Filipino Catholic network. We begin with the most basic unit, an Overseas Filipino worker (OFW). If we consider the typical

migratory chain, oftentimes this worker will be connected in some fashion to a large extended family. Each family is represented by an elder. Clusters of these families make up a religious association or 'community' which is hosted by a local Italian parish where its members live. Oftentimes, the families in communities hail from the same region in the Philippines, with a few exceptions. The network is centered around the activities of the Filipino chaplaincy of Sentro Filipino (Crane, 2004, IDOS). It is there that the leaders of the 44-46 communities congregate on the first Thursday of each month. The current chaplain enhanced group cooperation by grouping the communities together by location, creating the East, West, North and South clusters, allowing the communities to overcome the limitations of communication and coordination stemming from their number and geographic dispersion.

These religious organizations aimed to bring people closer to the Church and away from vices. Moreover, it was the hope that they would help preserve the cultural heritage of Filipiniana. The sizes of these communities vary. The smallest religious communities included in this had thirty-odd member families¹², five of which were active; while the largest had over 200 families, thirty-five of which were active. In the 1990s, many Filipinos in Rome did not have their own apartments so there were few private spaces for gathering. Moreover, the types of activities in these public spaces, such as drinking and gambling, were perceived as damaging to community spirit and reputation¹³. Thus, for active community members, the move to communities has given its members a valuable alternative to hanging out in public spaces such as parks and transportation hubs *and engage in activities that strengthen and enhance both community and cultural ties.*

Despite their level of formal organization, such as bylaws and other organizational structures, the perception is that community's activities are largely limited to supporting religious services and organizing religious celebrations. In actuality, religious communities also serve many practical and social functions. Some organize intercultural activities, sporting events and seminars. Others have established charities and cooperatives. Apostles Filipino Community (in Monteverde), for example, founded a credit cooperative. This cooperative has sustained itself financially and, in 2011, ten years

¹² It is important to note that the families being counted here are extended families which include grandparents, cousins and so forth.

¹³ Considering that their perceived decency and dependability is what gives them an advantage in employability and so Filipinos are, as a group, very protective of their collective reputation.

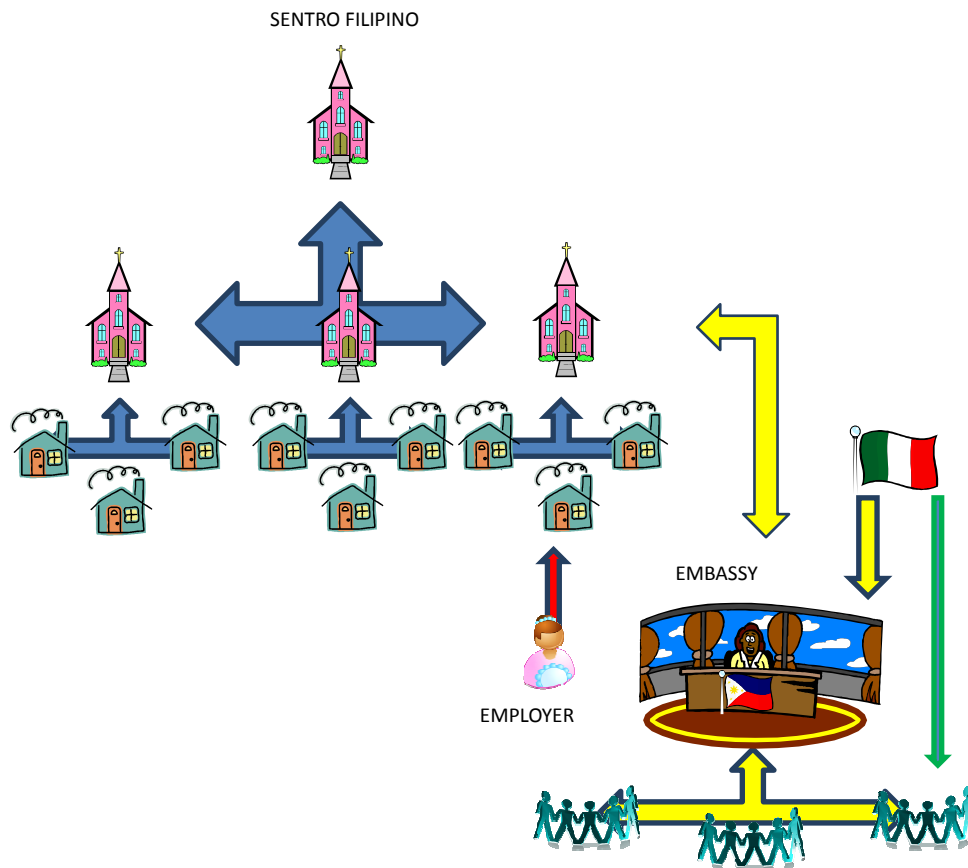
after it was established, has extended its charitable activities outside the community by funding five scholarships in the Philippines. Churches, especially Santa Prudenza, are also central locations where Filipinos in search of employment and Italians in search of a Filipino domestic worker can find each other.

More important for this study is the communicative function of the communities. When opportunities and issues affecting Filipinos come to the attention of the chaplaincy they disseminate the information to community leaders. Once community leaders receive important information they often call a meeting with heads of active families. When meetings cannot be coordinated, information is also spread via text, electronic mail or social networking sites like Facebook. Non-active members receive news in the announcements made directly following the celebration of mass. Some of these leaders also serve as the connecting node between their members and other Filipino leaders who have access to important resources. Subject 836, for example, recounts how, when his members need help with the renewal of their permit to stay, he petitions his district adjunct councilor, a fellow Filipino, 709, to refer the individual to her colleague, subject 871, a Peruvian who runs a service desk for immigrants. Returning to the idea of the value of old information under the context of immigration, subject 787 shares his observation the level of awareness that newer immigrants have about their rights has grown with each subsequent generation, thanks largely in part to information spread within the community. This information spread impacts behavior especially willingness to insist upon the observation of labor related rights.

The community leaders and leaders of other Filipino associations are all invited to the Philippine Embassy on the last Thursday of each month. The Filipino associations have missions that range from social to political. They meet at the embassy to discuss social issues affecting OFWs in Rome. For example, a new problem for Italians and Filipinos is the increasing number of retirement-age Filipinos in Italy. As noted, immigration is a rather recent phenomenon in Italy, beginning in the late '70s. Filipinos were among the first groups to immigrate to Italy. These pioneer immigrants have now reached retirement age and their presence creates a problem of administration and implementation for both governments. Because of the relative novelty of the issue, some Filipinos have left Italy, unaware that they are qualified for Italian pensions. In response, the embassy coordinated with the Italian Social Security Administration, *Istituto Nazionale della Previdenza Sociale* (INPS), to bring the information on program eligibility and requirements. Leaders then relay this new information to their association or community members. One limiting factor to information access is the location of

the embassy, which many Filipino immigrants find inconvenient. In addition, despite the regularity and quality of these information sessions, the exchange between the embassy and the Philippine community leaders lacks the collegial quality found at Urbana. There is also a perception that the flow of information with the embassy is top-down and uni-directional.

Chart 6. COMMUNICATION CHANNELS WITHIN THE FILIPINO COMMUNITY IN ROME

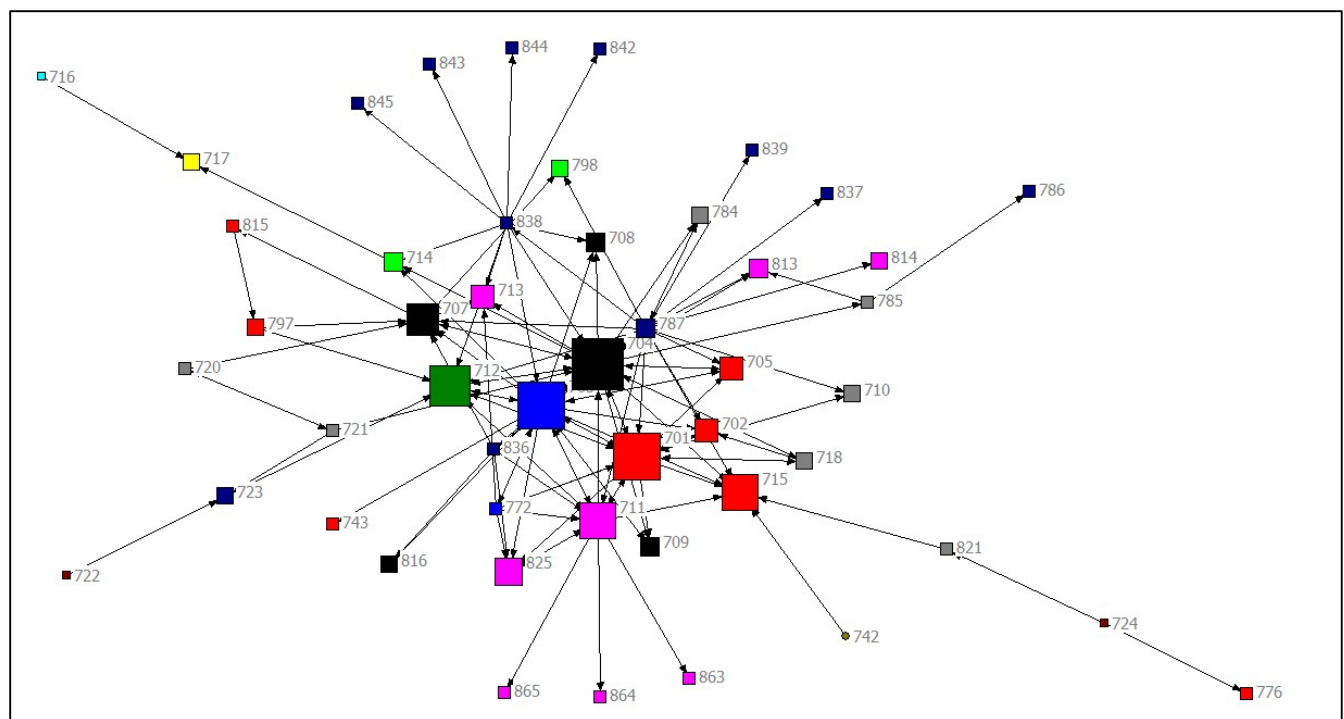


The Philippine Independence Day Association (PIDA) acts as another organizing element in the Philippine community organized around the Philippine Embassy. PIDA, which became a registered association about one year ago, organizes the June 12th celebration of Philippine Independence annually. Many community and association leaders also serve on PIDA, which meets at the embassy in the middle of each month. This monthly meeting provides yet another opportunity for interaction, exchange and cooperation amongst the Filipino community's most active members. In fact, it is through this volunteerism that some of newer groups or religious communities have finally formed ties to the embassy.

Besides the institution-based meetings, Filipinos can access information through Filipino newspapers, *Ako ay Pilipino* and *Kabayan*, the internet and Filipino radio programs. In particular, the Rome based newspaper, *Ako ay Pilipino* has been valued for the extensive translation of policy news from Italian to Tagalog. In addition, the national government also has devoted a special channel, Babel channel 141 on SkyTV, to foreign programming with Wednesdays being scheduled for Filipino programming. From the families, associations and churches, and media outlets, this information eventually finds itself on the street. Word-of-mouth, or *passaparola*, can be a powerful force in information dissemination. One leader, 838, jokingly observes, “Pero kahit na, nauunahan kami ng mga tsismosa” (But despite our efforts, the gossips beat us in information dissemination).

Chart 5 maps the relationships within the Filipino community to illustrates where the important connections are. It is important to note that some nodes have numerous roles in the community. For example Node 798 works for a union but is also a popular radio broadcaster. This level of detail is missing in this chart.

Chart 5. VISUAL MAP OF THE FILIPINO COMMUNITY IN ROME



LEGEND:
 RED: ASSOCIATION
 BLUE: ITALIAN GOVERNMENT AGENCY
 BLACK: CITY GOVERNMENT

GREY: BUSINESS
 PINK: EMBASSY
 DARK GREEN: CATHOLIC CHURCH
 LIGHT GREEN: UNION

LIGHT BLUE: INDIVIDUAL
 POLITICAL PARTY: YELLOW
 MUAVE: PUBLIC SCHOOL
 PURPLE : MEDIA

Subjects 701, 704, and 703 had the highest number of nominations. While the type of service that these subjects render to the community are different, the bridges they have with outside institutions place them in positions of high regard within the Filipino community. If we extend the image out to include relationships with non-Filipinos (See Chart 6), we can see the central location of these individuals in the wider network. For example, when we introduce these new entities into the network the degree of centrality measured by the number of in-degrees for subject 704 increases substantially. Each of these subjects plays dual roles as central connectors and boundary spanners.

Table 3. MEASURES OF EMBEDDEDNESS IN TWO FILIPINO SUBGROUPS

	DENSITY	CONNECTEDNESS	HIERARCHY	EFFICIENCY	LUB	E-I INDEX
Filipino Network	0.155	1.000	0.460	0.822	0.995	
Network704	0.518	1.000	0.000	0.467	1.000	0.51
Network707	0.471	1.000	0.133	0.462	1.000	0.45

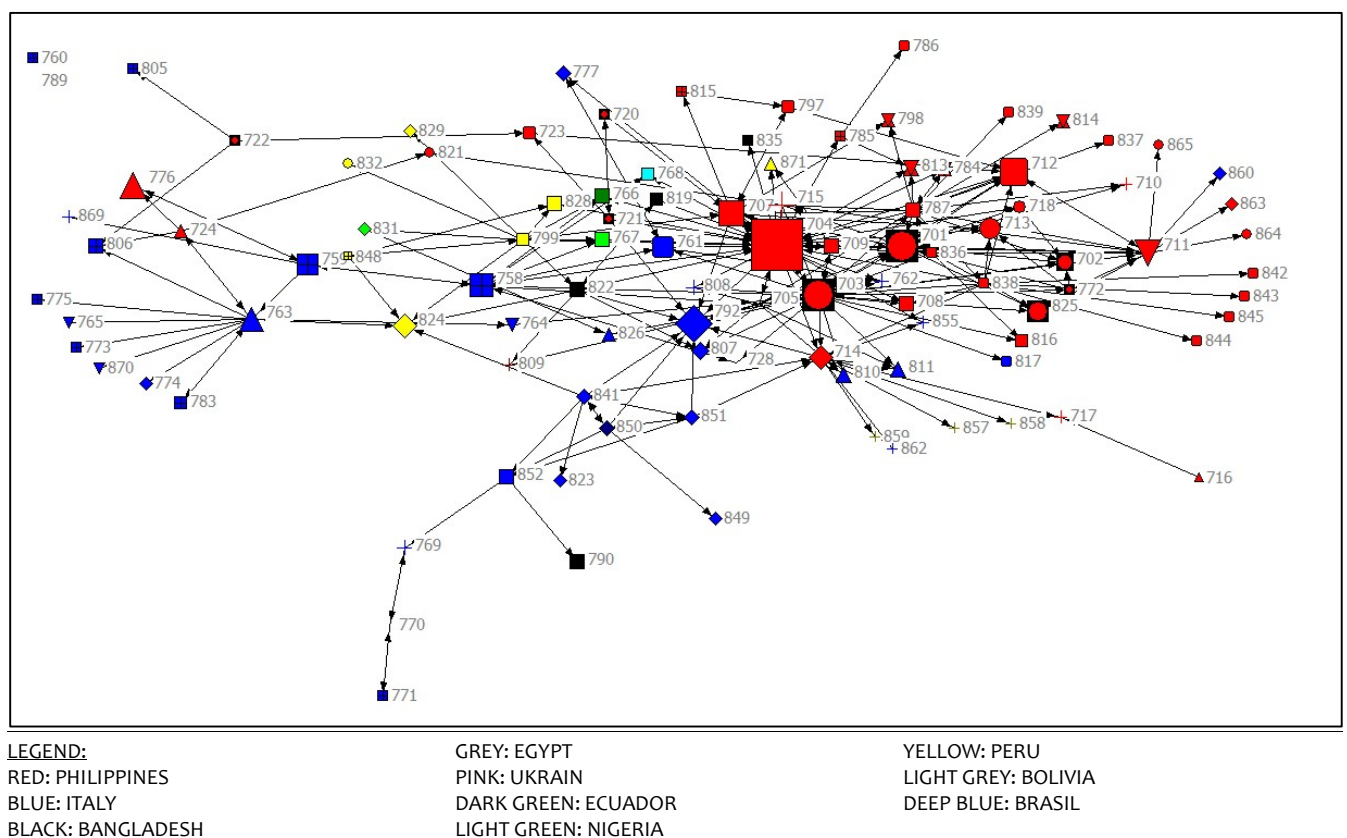
Network 704 (The Children's Pre-School Group)

703 and 704 are both members of this subgroup, a group of Filipino parents that have heavily invested in the establishment and maintenance of the Filipino community's first Filipino run daycare center (we discuss more on this later). Many of the parents who formed strong friendship bonds through this activity have maintained strong friendship ties (which accounts for the high reciprocity in this subgroup, Hierarchy score of 0.000). Members of this group use these relationships to support each other in their activities. For example, two members of this subgroup (703 and 709) also work with city and state government, and just as importantly, are the central actors in key Filipino run media outlets. 704 is the most active central connector and boundary spanner in the Filipino network and in his subgroup. When running for his elected position, 704 deployed resources within this his core subgroup for his campaign.

704's position as an elected representative for the community has allowed him to make some important relationships across ethnic groups. He uses these relationships to bring services and opportunities as well as information to his co-ethnics. 704 acts as an important bridge for his co-ethnics to outside resources, like assistance for their permit to stay. This in turn, further establishes his value to the Filipino community.

He uses his knowledge of his network to bring information to his constituents and also, perhaps more importantly, to bring information about his constituents to city government. His knowledge about his community and the bonds of trust he has built with co-ethnics are the basis of his value to the Italian and other communities hoping to include the Filipino community in their programs or activities. Not only do these out-group nodes learn where to go in the Filipino community through 704, they also learn about the best strategies to engage this community. In fact, some have even used their connections to 704 for their own political gain. 799, noticing the low numbers and lack of organization her ethnic community, found it strategically beneficial to join in 704's party list primarily because as she said, "Filipinos have such numbers and organization that when you get their vote, you get the win."

Chart 6. FILIPINO COMMUNITY WITHIN THE WIDER COMMUNITY



Network 707 (The Transnational Charity Group)

Probably the most well-regarded member of the community, affable 707 is a businessman slash political representative in the Filipino community who also manages a well-respected charitable

organization that that serves the needy in the Philippines. 707 has wisely employed his personal relationships in many ways showing how the organizational and informational channels established through religious communities can be employed for political organization. First, he employed the leader of the biggest religious community in his district, Subject 797, as his campaign manager. Having lost in his first campaign (the Filipino community in his district had three candidates), he decided to approach the other Filipinos to convince them not to run so that the Filipino vote would not be divided. On his first interview, he recounted how he and 797 also utilized 797's familiarity with the Filipino community in the district, finding their homes and busing them to the polls on the day of the election.

In Italy, immigrant political dynamics are complicated by the diverse makeup of immigrant neighborhoods (Ambrosini, 2002, Ammendola, et al., 2004; Montouri, 2007; Mudu, 2006). This diversity can create organization problems that burden processes of economic (Kloosterman and Rath, 2001) or political (Costa and Khan, 2002) mobilization. In a multi-ethnic Rome, political mobilization must cross the boundaries of the ethnic community¹⁴. Inter-elite cooperation can be useful for overcoming divisions even between ethnic communities that tend to be embedded or exclusive, allowing them to jointly achieve political representation (Lipjhart, 1968). Before they had the chance to participate in municipal elections, immigrants in the Rome have organized as one "immigrant" community to ask for recognition of their rights, often working with Italian political organizations.

Despite the degree of coordination and the ties to Italian institutions, Filipinos have still not managed to move towards 'integrated' political organization in the way that other communities have. One reason for this is the relative flatness of the relationships within the Philippine community. When everyone comes from the same 'class' and when few patron-client relationships exist in a community, we have very flat relationships. Since many Filipinos, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds in the Philippines, are all employed in similar work, there is both a high degree of cohesion and a large degree of flatness in the relationships within the Filipino community. This allows

14

This study treats the population of co-ethnics sharing a national origin living within a city as the community, e.g. the Albanese community.

for unity in action but it can also delay the speed of action because there are many cases where there is NO CLEAR LEADERSHIP, as indicated by the high degrees of reciprocity (and low measures of hierarchy) in the Filipino network and its subgroups. The second factor contributing to this lack of integration is the relative isolation from Italian institutions. Although Filipinos are among the most well-regarded ethnic groups in Italy, their social interactions with Italians has been limited primarily to work (IDOS, 2011 and Crane, 2004). This is partly due to their economic activities and also due to the fact that a majority of Filipinos have come to Italy with the intention of returning to the Philippines after they retire.

Two important demographic shifts could change this. The first trend is the presence of a retirement-age group who, because of the particularities and bureaucratic limitations of the Filipino and Italian pension systems, may find it more economically feasible to retire in Italy. The second trend is the growing presence of men and children whose numbers increased rapidly as family reunification was made possible through the Martelli Act of 1990. Not only do both trends create new needs around which the community must organize, they also lower the propensity for return migration and change the nature and number of institutional and social contact with Italians.

An example of this is the successful social endeavor in the community was the institution of a childcare center. This center was made possible through the assistance of Italian contacts, mostly from the charitable organization, CARITAS which helped in setting up the daycare and lobbying for public funding for the center. The coordinator, Subject 705, a politically active and well-connected member of the Filipino community, was pushed towards this enterprise by her outside contacts and leveraged her relationships (mostly associational, see *the Children's Pre-School Group*) within the community to establish and sustain the project, even through challenging times.

Another growing trend is the increased activity of Filipino parents in their children's parent-teacher association and the empowering exchanges resulting from their involvement. A case in point is 724 who, through her activities as a cultural mediator working at the school's PTA, has expanded her exposure and knowledge of Italian politics and participated and coordinated protests related to educational rights for extra-communitarian children in the school system. While not formally a leader in her own community, her presence in the PTA allows other Filipino parents to get information and services they need for their families and also has her embedded in a rich and multi-ethnic subgroup.

The potentialities for the Filipino community are growing. With their established organizational framework and increased interaction with the Italian community, community benefits from efforts of mixed embedded nodes can be maximized. One important limitation that regards the Filipino community more than the Bangladeshi community is the relative scarcity of these ‘boundary spanner – central connector’ nodes which can lead to bottlenecks, roadblocks and isolation, especially in the case that a node becomes inactive.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION:

The paper provides some examples of how opportunities move within these two ethnic communities through mixed embedded nodes that employ the cohesiveness of their subgroup as organizational mettle to meet the opportunities created when structural holes are spanned. One thing that is noteworthy is that in both of these communities, boundary spanners often positioned by their outward ties to play the role of central connector. Ties to the outside can reinforced the position of boundary spanners as central actors in their clusters and, in some cases, allow them to strengthen the hierarchical structure and move their agendas forward. Another important idea that requires further development is the role of the internal information brokers in facilitating the job of mixed embedded nodes.

We have also discussed the value in ready, repetitive and redundant information in the context of migration. In the Filipino case, the high level of redundancy has facilitated the quicker absorption of new migrants and has served as a way to block mis-interpretation and mis-information. What subject 704 calls, “a constant information dissemination campaign” which is leveraged to produce three outcomes: (1) increase trust and reciprocity in the network especially among the ‘poorly’ connected, (2) stability and (3) the freeing up of organizational resources to meet challenges introduced from the outside.

One important question that has not been broached is the role of trust and reciprocity in these systems and the extent to which leaders in systems can maintain their standing as legitimate leaders. Where exchange is uni-directional, emotional investments can be low and make a leader interchangeable with another. As Sandefur and Laumann (1998) observe, the ability to place oneself in others debt is an important quality to building reciprocal relationships that enhance cooperation.

A final observation that needs further development is the benefits to Italian policy makers and

interest groups of having relationships with mixed-embedded nodes. These relationships enable them to (1) gain legitimacy within these communities, (2) Cross check the value of the information that they are getting from the community and (3) find the right targets from which to collect and to which to deliver information.

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